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OR

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A DAY AT "LE COLLÈGE BOURBON."

I have witnessed few scenes which I found productive of more varied, more pleasurable, or more exciting sensations, than the distribution of prizes which I viewed at "Le Collège Bourbon" in August 1828. The youthful aspirants to early fame, were pupils of the several schools in Paris that are under the direction of this College, to which they are conducted by their masters and tutors every day, for a certain number of hours, to receive instruction from professors appointed by government, and to be examined as to the progress they have made during school hours.

Once each year the young student's labours are rewarded by the distribution of prizes, consisting of books and crowns of ivy; adjudged most impartially, according to the merit of each boy. This takes place before a very large assembly, consisting principally of the relations and friends of the youths, and as I was acquainted with some of Monsieur B——'s pupils, I was presented with a ticket of admission. I had an opportunity also of observing with what intense anxiety the important day was expected by my young friends, who were interested in its events. At last it arrived, a bright sunny morning, and at ten o'clock my party and I found ourselves in the rue Sanmarin, amidst a crowd of anxious eager countenances, all hurrying to the Collège Bourbon: we entered a very spacious courtyard, which had been covered with an awning, and laid out with benches for the spectators.

Opposite the door by which we entered, was a platform considerably elevated, covered with a crimson cloth, it contained seats for the professors, who awarded the prizes; on one side was placed a large pile of handsomely bound books, of different sizes, on the other a quantity of ivy wreaths. The different schools were placed round the enclosure, a little elevated, and separated from the mass of spectators. Every thing was arranged with that quiet order and regularity, so remarkable in every public place in France, although on this occasion there seemed to be candidates for more places than could conveniently be found. At last, when all was tranquil, when plumes, flowers and chapeaux had settled into their places, the buzz of female voices subsided, as a flourish of trumpets announced the entrance of the professors; they were three in number, and took their places with much dignity, the principal was a tall noble-looking old man, with white hair, and a gentle almost pensive expression of countenance, the other two were middle-aged men, the one possessing what is generally considered a completely French physiognomy, thin, sallow, and spiritual, with dark eyes in perpetual motion, that seemed to pry even to the farthest recesses of the large enclosure in which we sat. The only thing which struck me in the appearance of the

other, was a pair of very white hands, which he seemed to take no inconsiderable pleasure in displaying, whenever opportunity offered. The three presidents were dressed in crimson robes, with high conical caps on their heads; the elder addressed the assembly, and particularly the pupils, in a very energetic and affecting speech, in which he said, the honors they now received would perhaps confer as much pleasure as any they might win in after life, and that when they (the professors) should hear in future years, well known names ranked among the great and honoured of the land, they would proudly say, "Ils furent nos élèves."

The name of each boy to whom a prize was assigned, and the study for which he deserved it, was called aloud from a long roll of paper, held by a person appointed for that purpose, he who was named, had then to walk through the midst of the assembly to the platform, a narrow space having been left between the benches to admit him, he then knelt to the chief president, who placed a crown of ivy on his head, which was handed by his assistants, saluted him on each cheek, and presenting the happy boy with the volumes awarded, dismissed him, upon which he descended the steps of the platform, amidst a flourish of trumpets, and the cheers of his school-fellows. Notwithstanding the easy and enviable self-possession and confidence which the French possess, even from their infancy, it was not conspicuous on this occasion; I saw many a young cheek grow pale, or flush into crimson beneath the gaze of so many hundreds, as they hurried precipitately to claim their reward, two or three even stumbled as they ascended the steps.

The city where each was born was also named; and though the greater number were French, several Spanish, English, Dutch, German, and Italian names met my ear, with the respective birth places of those who bore them. "Alphonse Gonsalve de Torres, né à Madrid," exclaimed the little man who called forth the names, "you are adjudged the first prize in Latin and Greek composition;" and a tall, graceful youth of fifteen, rushed forward; his large dark eyes sparkling with delight, and the "eloquent blood" speaking even through his olive-coloured cheek. From the loud cheers and reiterated bravos! of his school-fellows, it was evident the young Spaniard was a favourite: not far from me, sat a lady dressed in black, whom I had remarked at first, from the symmetry of her shape and her graceful walk; she was closely veiled, but on hearing the young Spaniard named, had uncovered her face, and risen from her seat to gaze on him with an expression of intense interest and tenderness: although she seemed not more than thirty, I afterwards learned she was his mother—that her husband, a nobleman of high rank, had lost his life during some political dissensions, and his widow and son, forced to fly, had taken refuge in France, where they lived in very hum-

ble circumstances. Henri Servier, né à Paris, was named as a mathematician; he made his appearance, a little, pale-faced, quiet-looking boy of 12 years old, who walked very composedly to receive his meed; on his return to his seat, he caught the eye of an old animated-looking lady fixed on him with delight. His countenance instantly lighted up, and he returned with a bounding step, while the old lady (his grand-mother,) exclaimed, as her eyes filled with tears, "Ah! ma pauvre fille, que n'est tu pas en vie!"

I heard with peculiar interest the names of four or five young Britons, who, when they advanced to be crowned, presented to the touch of the old president's lip, cheeks where their British blood glowed with a brightness that would have shamed the peach. At the name of Charles O'Donnell, né à Dublin, I looked eagerly round to see how the young 'Irlandois' would advance; he was a stout, joyous-looking little fellow of ten or eleven years old, with something in his aspect, and quick intelligent eye, that would have led me to fancy him of French extraction, were it not for a fine clear colour, rarely seen on the surface of a Gallic youth's countenance. He advanced, not in the least abashed, to receive a prize for elocution, (he must have been some time in France,) and as the crown intended to adorn his brows, happened to be very large, and fell round his neck collar-wise, the rogue could not smother a laugh. His coronation was hailed with loud and repeated cheers by his fellow students.

The boys can guess pretty nearly whether they will obtain prizes or not; but till the time of distribution arrives, they cannot be certain of it. I sat between two ladies, one an English friend of mine, the other, a French acquaintance; each had a son for whose name they listened with maternal anxiety. Poor Mrs. T——, naturally nervous, became painfully so, when Madame de B——'s son, Alphonse, who was in the class with her little James, was awarded a prize, whilst his gratified mother smiled triumphantly, as she said to Mrs. T——, "J'espere qu'on n'oubliera pas mon petit ami James." James T—— was at last, however, made the happy possessor of two prizes, to the inexpressible delight of his mother and two pretty sisters, who seemed to consider his honour as their own.

When the distribution was over, those who had gained prizes rushed to join their happy and admiring friends; and many were the praises and embraces they received: certainly the French are to all appearance, the best and most devoted parents in the world. Many youths had half a dozen wreaths hanging on one arm, and more books than they could carry beneath the other, as they had been named several times. Amongst these was Gonsalve de Torres.

The distribution lasted nearly six hours, but I felt no ennui, the scene was so exciting and

animated; yet who could look on all those young, ardent, smiling boys, flushed with these their first triumphs, and who, whilst their hearts beat high with success, deemed it but the beginning of a joyous and triumphant career, nor sigh to think how soon, how easily, those bright hopes might be clouded, and with many of them too certainly and for ever; for the prizes of life are not, alas! so impartially bestowed; talent and industry must struggle with envy, injustice, ignorance, and a host of other foes, and but too often fail in the contest; or, like the noble animal that strains every nerve to attain the goal he reaches but to die, they may win at last their just reward, yet feel—oh how mournfully!—that it has come too late, when the hearts and eyes that would have throbbed and brightened at the tidings of their victory, are cold and dim in the silent grave, and success or miscarriage are but a mockery of empty sounds.

Mtta.

REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

Chronicles of a School-Room. By Mrs. S. C. Hall.—Westley and Davis, London.

There is no female writer of the present day, whose manner of composition is more calculated to please, than that of the lady whose name stands at the head of this review. There is a frankness and good nature in her style—a simplicity and feminine familiarity, which, while it seems to put her immediately upon good terms with her readers, is elevated by good sense, and rendered impressive by the excellence of the principles and feelings which it ever seems her aim to inculcate. After this character of Mrs. Hall's writings, generally, we need scarcely add, that in the "nice little book" from her pen, which has just been published, our public, and particularly the masters and misses, for whose juvenile entertainment it was more especially intended, will find much to instruct and to delight them.

For ourselves, stern critics as we are, wedded to nothing but our studies, and destitute, unhappily, of any domestic companions, save our cat, our kettle, and our books, we look, perhaps, with less of interest upon this new work of Mrs. Hall's, than others may be supposed to do, who have a more intimate *family* concern in the interests of the rising generation. We are of those too who cleave to aught of original genius, or graphic power, which a new book displays; and in this respect we must confess that, in our opinion, other of our authoress's works surpass this one—but this is rather an objection to the subject which has been chosen, than to the manner in which it has been treated. What Mrs. Hall has done, she has done well; but had she chosen to do something else, for which her powers (which are of a much higher order than those generally deemed necessary for writing children's books,) would have been more particularly fitted, she would have done yet better.

It would, however, be rank injustice not to say, that this little book must form an admirable present for the young, to whom parents and friends wish to afford some elegant entertainment, blended with lessons which show the advantages of good feeling and good temper, and the odiousness of what is spiteful, or mean, or ill-natured.

We are introduced to the "Chronicle," old Mrs. Ashburton, in the pleasant village of "Little Hampton," where our authoress is supposed to have sojourned some years ago, and to have made the acquaintance of this old lady, who had formerly been the mistress of a school, where a few young ladies were brought up, as in a family. The old lady is represented as good, and garrulous; and she proposes to relate the "*Chronicles of her School-Room*—recollections of those beloved children, who, for so many years, were unto her, even as her own."

In this way seven stories are given to us—related at different meetings with the venerable schoolmistress; and between each, some remarks and reflections are introduced, in which we recognise the usual graceful kindness, and good humour, of our authoress's manner;—but still, as she is here obliged to abandon narrative and description, she is not, to our fastidious taste, quite so happy as we have elsewhere found her.

But our dear young friends, who will, we hope, all read the book, would say, if they heard us talking thus, that we were "a nasty cross old man;" and opening the volume, triumphantly, would ask us if we could help loving and praising "sweet May Douglas?" Indeed, we cannot. May Douglas must be a favourite with every one; let her portrait come forth, and speak for her.

"I cannot describe May to you, nor can I chronicle her as she deserves. Her companions never called her solely by her sweet and simple name, there was always some accompaniment to it. It was either "Merry May," or "Pretty May," or "Gentle May," or "Highland May," but more frequently than all, "Sweet May Douglas!" And in truth, she united in her fairy form, all the feminine virtues—a duodecimo of loves and graces. She was merry, and pretty, and gentle; of noble Scottish descent; the soul of mirth and innocence—like a sunbeam that rests upon the earth without being contaminated by its baseness. Sweet May Douglas! She was born in May, baptised in May, came to Howard Cottage in May, and left it in May, after a brief sojourn of two years. How we all loved her! If she had a fault, it was a *little* petulance, or rather impatience of temper, an over eagerness to do all things—the evil attendant upon activity and genius; and it was provokingly difficult to correct it. Often have I called her, intending to reprove some hasty gesture, or still more hasty word, and she would come and raise her speaking violet eyes, swimming in tears, to my face, while the reproof still hung upon my lips. Nothing but the powerful knowledge of the responsibility of my situation would ever have forced me to visit with displeasure this lovely child of the mountain land. When I first saw her, she was about fourteen, but not larger than most children of ten, the only daughter of a long-widowed father, and had never until then quitted his castle in the Highlands, where he shielded his love-flower with that deep and almost engrossing anxiety, that a man of feeling and cultivated mind can alone conceive. He was a scholar and a gentleman—much sorrow had estranged him from the world. "But I must one day, for her sake, return to it, and guard her there as well as in solitude," he said to me, "and as I would not have my child deficient in what are called accomplishments, let her be well

tutored in music, drawing, and dancing; investigate her progress in French and Italian, as well as in general information, and my young recluse will not be found wanting." To all but May, the Douglas was a cold, stern man, but I never felt more keenly for the sorrow of another, than when he parted from his daughter in my little parlour, which the pupils called the "reception room." The full tears burst, and ran down his iron countenance; as, at last, he placed the sweet girl in my arms, and rushed to his carriage."

From this extract, our readers may collect what is the prevailing style of this little work. The air of a teacher is completely abandoned, and while instruction is conveyed, the feelings are sought to be interested, and a love of imitation of an amiable character, induced by an appeal to these sources of action, which are frequently even more influential, than the conviction of reason.

The story in this volume which has affected us most, and which seems to appeal to feelings of a loftier, and more deeply interesting nature than the rest, is that of "ZILLAH PENROSE," the young Quakeress. The abiding meekness, and serious goodness, combined with calm strength of character, exhibited in this portrait, cannot fail, we think, strongly to impress the minds of all readers of any sensibility, and since the natural tendency of youth is to a too great exuberance of every feeling and passion that for the moment actuates them, we know of no lesson more calculated to serve them, than a well told story, which shall engage their mind in admiration of meekness and gentle forbearance, and clear, calm, unobtrusive good sense. The sketch too of the father of Zillah, which is given in the beginning of the narrative, is full of truth, and chaste description. He is represented to have been the companion of Mrs. Ashburton (the chronicle), in his youth, and to have gone to America, from whence he returns to place his only daughter at her school, when about to depart, he addresses thus, his old friend, the mistress of the school:—

"I wish Zillah to mix as little as possible in the plays of her companions; I wish her to avoid all vain shew, and to be sober minded; to be as much as is convenient with herself; thou knowest that friends avoid all unnecessary waste of time, all temptations to what is called pleasure; nevertheless, as she has a desire to study drawing, I permit her to cultivate that art, but would rather wish her to be skilled in languages, particularly French and Italian; music and dancing of course she must not learn. I will tell thee why, if thou wishest, another time. One thing I must request, that every morning in the solitude of thine own chamber, thou wilt read with her a portion of the Holy Scriptures; other things will I mention in her absence, for thou knowest, he continued, turning to his daughter, that the elders must of necessity say much that is not meet for ears so young as thine. Thou Lucy Ashburton, wilt bear with these peculiarities for the sake of thine old friend, and I need not add, wilt be unto her as a mother, when she is far removed from home and kindred." I promised this, and firmly adhered to it. The further directions which he gave me, were concerning the manner he wished her to pursue her studies, and the accomplishments (he considered them evils) which he desired her to avoid. One thing I particularly remember—Zillah seemed so deeply